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ABSTRACT

A number of basic underlying issues control supply and demand in the profession of trade and industrial (T & I) laboratory teachers. First, most competent T & I teachers can earn more in business and industry. Second, state departments of education respond generally to teacher shortages by decreasing collegiate and work experience requirements. Third, T & I teachers with Bachelor of Science degree expect to earn more than nondegreed teachers. Fourth, state employment qualifications that foster the employment of nondegreed teachers perpetuate the hiring of local craftspersons. Fifth, degreed T & I teacher applicants typically possess less occupational experience than nondegreed applicants. Sixth, nondegreed teachers can complete a two-year general studies program and reach the same goal as a teacher who has spent four years completing a baccalaureate degree. Strategies to induce T & I people to enter a degree program have included emphasis on the possibility of advancement and monetary enhancement. Change will only occur if T & I teacher educators become involved with the persons and organizations that have initiated and propagated the present system. (YLB)

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DO WE REALLY WANT DEGREED T & I TEACHERS?

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DO WE REALLY WANT DEGREED T & I TEACHERS?

Despite over forty years of rhetoric, controversy and reports of assorted ideas and experimental programs, we must face the reality that the majority of Trade and Industrial (T & I) laboratory teachers are still non-degreed. The literature has reported dozens of innovative pre-service and in-service programs for producing degree teachers, some more successful than others. The fact remains, however, that few such programs have reached fruition and that nationally, only minor progress has been made in the direction of increasing the percentage of degreed T & I teachers.

The Issues

It appears that much of the ideological and experimental work done in the past was not really based upon a solid understanding of the basic underlying conditions which control supply and demand in the profession. The deeper root issues must be analyzed, understood and resolved before lasting change

can occur.

First, and foremost, it is well known that most competent T & I teachers can earn far more in business/industry than in education. Hence there have many attempts over the years by State Departments of Education to establish recommended salary levels based upon years of occupational experience in lieu of collegiate experience, i.e., one step on the salary schedule for each two years spent on the job, etc. Although this is an admirable approach and there undoubtedly has been a productive impact, the point still remains that (1) the locale cannot be forced to meet State Department of Education recommendations, and (2) increments, usually computed on a salary ladder, still do not really compare with industry. This approach is really designed to attract non-degree persons to the profession and actually has an inverse affect on T & I degree productivity.

Second, when there is a shortage of qualified teachers in a teaching area, State

Departments of Education are generally pressured by the localities to decrease both collegiate and work experience requirements. This action allows the local agencies to fill positions rather than cancel programs for lack of qualified applicants. Following this line of reasoning one step further, we observe that certification requirements are responsive to the law of supply and demand. Shortages of qualified teachers are typically solved at the state level by enacting regulations which first seek to lower the quality of college preparation and as a last resort, lower the quality of occupational on-the-job experience.

Third, B. S. degree T & I teachers, as a group, voice the expectation (and justifiably so) that they should be compensated for four years of collegiate effort. It is pertinent here to compare the degreed and non-degreed teacher's earnings during a typical four year pre-teaching period of time. The degreed teacher has had greatly diminished earnings, generally working part-time while attending college, often depending on the wife's income

in part. The skilled craftsperson who decide to enter teaching with a non-degree credential will probably have earned $100,000 to $120,000 during the same period. It follows then, that degree teachers should rightfully earn more than non-degree teachers. However, with the non-degree teacher salary schedule already higher, on the average, than the degreed academic teacher, as pointed out in the first premise, a further increment would boost degree T & I salaries to a disproportionate and spurious level as compared with all teachers. School boards, many of whom do not comprehend the aforementioned rationale, are hardly prone to create local dissension among staff by promoting widely differentiating salary schedules based upon supply and demand. Compare for example the history teacher on the tenth step of the salary schedule earning the same salary as the T & I teacher at the second step. Sometimes it becomes easier to avoid problems by simply pretending to be satisfied with less qualified personnel.

Fourth, as long as state certification

requirements foster the employment of non-degree teachers, there will always be a pool of local craftspersons available to fill the void. When vacancies occur in rural counties, well known solid citizens in the community are more likely to be hired than non-local B. S. degree graduates from a distant State University. That is to say, "Why hire an unknown when the school board can hire a local auto mechanics teacher who is respected by everyone in the community not only for his/her trade expertise but also for contributions as a Sunday school teacher, Boy/Girl Scout leader, Kiwanis Club member, et. al?" This is certainly a political consideration, but it cannot be ignored if an honest interpretation of the issues is to be presented here.

Fifth, degree T & I teacher applicants will typically possess less occupational experience than non-degree applicants. This is apparent because of the time which B. S. teachers must spend in pursuit of the degree. Many State Departments of Education do count

the four years of college in lieu of an equivalent amount of occupational experience, thus resulting in a minimal two years of occupational experience for a large number of our young T & I degree graduates. Often too, the real life experience is somewhat less than that because cooperative education programs at the college will count in the total. There is nothing basically wrong with the aforementioned coop program approach, but one must also be cognizant of the advantages of working on a real payroll job, i.e., punching the clock, carrying a lunch bucket, and being a competetive producer in all phases of work assigned.

We must face the reality that, other factors being equal, an applicant with perhaps five or six years of bonafide occupational experience will be favored over one with two or less years of experience. The varied nature of the experience is also a consideration. One can accumulate more kinds of experience over a six year period than over a two year period.

Sixth, if T & I teachers have passed the National Occupational Competency Institute (NOCTI) examination for college credit and then proceed to take all of the pedagogical work required by state regulation for non-degree teachers, they have already documented competency in (1) the teaching area of expertise, and (2) the pedagogy of teaching technical subjects. Considering that the two aforementioned components typically make up approximately half of a degree program, non-degree T & I teachers lack only the general studies component, i.e, humanities, social studies, science and physical education. Many non-degree T & I teachers who find that they wish to make a career of teaching, do enroll in and complete a two year general studies program at a local community college while they are teaching. This may make good sense. Why spend four years in completing a baccalaurete degree prior to teaching when the same goal can be accomplished after one is sure that he/she has the qualities, interest and expertise required of the T & I teacher?

This writer sees continual evidence of students in various segments of the university who spend four years preparing for a career to which they cannot adapt in real life. This is a sad commentary on the guidance aspect of higher education programs.

Considering the six conditions presented thus far, what are some reasonable strategies to utilize in approaching the problem? One common inducement to attract T & I people to a degree program is to emphasize that the degree enhances the possibility of advancement in the educational field. Seek the master's degree after teaching a few years and move into administration, guidance, coop supervision, curriculum development or other allied fields where prestige and money are strong enhancements.

Another inducement which has become popular among T & I recruiters in the past several years is to compare the monetary enhancement of employment in business/industry versus education, a point alluded to in the first of the aforementioned issues. Many

institutions offer both the teaching and the non-teaching T & I and/or Technical option. Quite needless to say, the teaching option suffers when such an approach is offered--but it does have the effect of keeping the program intact.

In none of the inducements considered thus far are we promoting degree programs for T & I teachers who seek to remain in the classroom and laboratory. In the opinion of this writer, real progress can be made only if we are willing to deal with the basic underlying causes rather than with surface issues, which are primarily enrollment increasing devices. Simply going out on recruiting drives and passing out multi-colored brochures without really studying the issues is not a long term solution.

A lengthly dissertation could be written on the various means of attacking the six issues presented here. Upon close inspection however, the problems are really resultant of State Department of Education and local regulations, policies and/or circumstances.

Until we as T & I teacher educators become involved more with the local district and State Department of Education decision making process, the situation is not likely to change. We need to serve on state certification boards, often testimony at regional and state hearings, play leadership roles in local vocational director groups, vocational school principal associations and become involved with state and local advisory committees. Concurrent with our busy schedules we need to establish rapport and interact politically with the people who see these issues in a different light because of their particular job orientation.

If we choose to ignore the issues and live in our own worlds of teaching and research, the policies which influence the demand for degree T & I teachers will be decided by others -- those who have a vested interest in keeping the situation just the way it is now.

We often look to money as a panacea to affect all desirable change. In this

particular issue, however, we need to utilize a different approach. Grants, subsidies, and experimental programs are not the key to change. It appears that a carefully planned program of involvement, which will slowly change the thinking of key individuals has the best chance of success.

Conclusions and Implications

Some conclusions, along with pertinent implications for change, offer a proper closure to this discussion.

1. The concept of bolstering T & I degree programs has been a persistent issue for many years. Constant rhetoric has done little to change the situation.
2. Experimental programs designed to enhance the numbers of degree T & I teachers have had temporary and spotty successes but have not had any dramatic impact nationally.
3. A basic problem in addressing the paucity of degree T & I laboratory teachers has been one of failing to

scrutinize the basic underlying issues which have produced and continue to perpetuate the situation. There are six basic issues, as follows:

A. As long as T & I teacher salaries are disproportionately lower than middle management salaries in industry, how can we realistically expect to attract qualified persons to the profession?

B. State Departments of Education will generally lower academic and occupational certification requirements in fields where shortages occur, thereby encouraging the non-degree concept.

C. Degree T & I teachers should rightfully expect a greater earning capacity than non-degree T & I teachers. Inasmuch as non-degree T & I teachers earn more, comparatively than degree academic teachers, all other conditions being equal, a spurious salary disparity of this

magnitude cannot be defended by local school board policy.

D. As long as non-degree certification regulations are being fostered by State Departments of Education, there will always be a pool of local craftspersons to fill the void. Local hiring officials, especially in rural areas, will generally employ well-known local non-degree applicants over unknown non-local degree applicants.

E. Degree T & I teacher applicants will, on the average, have less bonafide occupational experience than non-degree applicants. Local hiring personnel, not being aware of "how much is enough" will lean toward hiring candidates with a great deal of on-the-job experience.

F. Non-degree teachers have or will accumulate (1) the knowledge and skill in the area of occupational expertise, and (2) the pedagogical

skills required through state certification regulations. They are missing only the general education component. Many administrators see nothing wrong with this rationale. After all, how much culture is needed in a laboratory situation where the emphasis is on marketable skills? Is culture and basic skill fluency really important for T & I teachers?

5. Past inducements to draw people into the T and I degree program have been largely superficial in the sense that the rationale did not necessarily dwell on attracting T & I degree teachers who will continue to teach in the laboratory.
6. The only realistic way in which benefical change will occur is for T & I teacher educators to become involved with the persons and organizations that have initiated and propagated the present system. Involvement by T and I teacher educators in the regulatory

and political activities, as brought out in the aforementioned issues, will eventually bear fruit.

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